

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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R 160615Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5326
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 2575

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, JA
SUBJECT: DEFENSE AND DIET ATMOSPHERE

SUMMARY: WHILE ATTENTION IN CURRENT DIET SESSION HAS
THUS FAR FOCUSED HEAVILY ON ECONOMY, GOJ'S MORE FORTH-
RIGHT EFFORT THAN IN PAST TO EXPLAIN DEFENSE PROBLEMS
HAS RESULTED IN MODESTLY EXPANDED CONSTITUTIONAL INTER-
PRETATIONS. PRIMIN SET PACE IN DIET POLICY STATEMENT AND
WAS FOLLOWED BY JDA DIRGEN, AND CABINET LEGISLATIVE
BUREAU CHIEF, WHO MAINTAINED THAT PRESENT DEFENSE EQUIP-
MENT-ACQUISITION PLANS WERE CONSTITUTIONAL AND THAT
INTERPRETATION OF CONSTITUTION WAS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
AS RESULT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION. PRESENTATION
OF GOVERNMENT "UNIFIED VIEW" ON FEBRUARY 14 REAFFIRMED
SPOKESMEN'S POSITIONS. JSP AND JCP WILL PROBABLY
CONTINUE TO SEEK MILEAGE FROM DEFENSE ISSUE BUT THEY
ARE UNLIKELY TO GAIN MUCH SUPPORT FROM CENTRIST PARTIES,
WHICH NOW HOLD VIEWS CLOSER TO LDP. DEBATE HAS BEEN
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REALISTIC AND OBJECTIVE WITH MODERATE POSITION -- FIRM
MAINTENANCE OF US-JAPAN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND CON-
TINUED MODERNIZATION OF JAPANESE FORCES -- STRENGTHENED.
END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE ATTENTION HAS, UNDERSTANDABLY, FOCUSED ON
ECONOMIC ISSUES DURING FIRST THREE WEEKS OF DIET DEBATE,

DEFENSE QUESTIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN RAISED FROM TIME TO TIME. SO FAR THEY HAVE BEEN DEFTLY FIELDDED IN MORE FORTHRIGHT MANNER THAN IN YEARS PAST BY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN, WHO APPEAR TO BE MAKING CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO MODIFY PRECEDENTS ESTABLISHED IN EARLIER DEBATES, THEREBY EXPANDING INTERPRETATIONS OF CONSTITUTION. TONE WAS SET BY PRIMIN IN JANUARY 20 ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY SPEECH, IN WHICH HE NOT ONLY UNDERScoreD IMPORTANCE OF US-JAPAN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, BUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT DEFENSE PROVIDED FOUNDATION FOR NATION'S SURVIVAL AND THAT HE WAS GRATIFIED THAT PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING AND INTEREST IN ISSUE HAS BEEN GROWING OVER YEARS (TOKYO 1130).

2. APPARENTLY TAKING LEAD FROM PRIMIN, SUBSEQUENT GOJ SPOKESMEN HAVE SUCCESSFULLY STOOD THEIR GROUND ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES THAT ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE CAUSED PROCEEDINGS TO FLOUNDER IN FACE OF OPPOSITION COUNTEROFFENSIVE. FOLLOWING ARE SOME ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES:

(A) ON JANUARY 24 JDA DIRGEN KANEMARU SAID THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN A STRONG DEFENSE POWER WHICH COULD PREVENT AGRESSION, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOT BE INTENDED FOR OFFENSIVE PURPOSES.

(B) ON JANUARY 30, AFTER ASSERTIONS BY PRIMIN THAT
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JAPANESE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT WAS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF CONSTITUTION AND THAT CONCEPT OF CIVILIAN CONTROL WOULD BY FULLY OBSERVED, JDA DIRGEN DEFENDED EQUIPPING F-15S WITH MID-AIR REFUELING CAPABILITY ON GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE INTERCEPTORS AND THEIR AIR-TO-SURFACE ATTACK FUNCTIONS WERE LIMITED. HE RECALLED THAT, INASMUCH AS F-4S WERE CAPABLE OF CARRYING NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND SOPHISTICATED BOMB-SIGHTS AND COULD ATTACK WITH AIR-TO-GROUND MISSILES, SUCH EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN REMOVED; F-15S DID NOT CARRY SUCH EQUIPMENT, BUT NECESSITY FOR SPENDING LONG HOURS ALOFT DICTATED HAVING MID-AIR REFUELING CAPABILITY.

(C) AT SAME SESSION, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION AS TO WHETHER CONSTITUTION INTERPRETATION, THEREFORE, WAS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS RESULT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION, CABINET LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS BUREAU DIRGEN SANADA, SENIOR CAREER LEGAL ADVISOR TO PRIMIN WITH CABINET STATUS, STATED THAT GOJ HAD MAINTAINED CONSISTENT VIEW THAT DEFENSE POWER MUST NOT EXCEED THAT NECESSARY FOR SELF-DEFENSE. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT DEPENDING ON SITUATION AT ANY GIVEN TIME, INTERPRETATION COULD CHANGE; OTHER NATIONS, HOWEVER, WOULD FEEL A THREAT IF JAPAN, ALONE, WERE TO

POSSESS "MACHINE GUNS IN AN AGE OF BAMBOO SPEARS."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TOKYO 2575

(D) ON JANUARY 31, SANADA RETURNED TO CONSTITUTIONAL
THEME WHEN, IN RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION QUESTION ON PROPRIETY
OF TRAINING IN US FOR ASDF PILOTS, HE SAID THAT DISPATCH
OF PILOTS FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION WOULD BE SAME AS
TRAINING OF MSDF IN WATERS ADJACENT TO JAPAN AND WOULD,
THEREFORE, PRESENT NO CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS.

(E) IN RESPONSE TO FEBRUARY 7 QUESTION ON WHETHER
RESPONDING TO APPARENT US DESIRE, AS EXPRESSED IN SECDEF'S
STATEMENT, THAT JAPAN ASSUME MORE OF DEFENSE BURDEN WOULD
NOT VIOLATE CONSTITUTION, SANADA SAID THAT IN MAKING
SUCH A JUDGEMENT, ONE MUST CONSIDER SUCH QUESTIONS AS
INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AT TIME AND ADVANCES IN SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY.

(F) ALSO ON 7TH, JDA SPOKESMAN, WHILE DENYING CONSTRUC-
TION PLANS, NOTED THAT POSSESSION OF AIRCRAFT CARRIER
FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES WOULD BE WITHIN SCOPE OF CONSTITU-
TION.

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(G) IN RESPONSE TO OPPOSITION DEMAND, JDA ON FEBRUARY 14 SUBMITTED GOJ "UNIFIED VIEW" TO LOWER HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE THAT "WAR POTENTIAL," WHICH IS PROHIBITED BY CONSTITUTION, IS THAT WHICH EXCEEDED MINIMUM NECESSARY FOR SELF-DEFENSE; THAT IT COULD NOT BE DENIED THAT LIMITS OF SELF-DEFENSE POWER HAD RELATIVE ASPECT THAT COULD CHANGE, DEPENDING ON INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, LEVEL OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY, ETC., AT TIME; AND THAT IT WENT WITHOUT SAYING THAT SUCH WEAPONS AS ICBMS AND STRATEGIC BOMBERS COULD NOT BE PERMITTED. VIEW WENT ON TO ASSERT THAT F-15 AND P-3C WERE BEING INTRODUCED AS REPLACEMENTS FOR AGING AIRCRAFT AND WERE MODERNIZATION OF EQUIPMENT ALREADY IN PLACE. INASMUCH AS THEY WOULD POSE NO THREAT TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, THEY WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE ACQUISITION OF "WAR POTENTIAL".

3. COMMENT: WHILE OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY JSP AND JCP, WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO SEEK POLITICAL MILEAGE FROM THESE ISSUES -- ASAHI TOUTS DEBATE AS "INEVITABLE" -- THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO GET MUCH SUPPORT FROM DSP, NLC AND KOMEITO, ALL OF WHICH NOW HOLD VIEWS CLOSER TO THOSE OF LDP AND GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP. SANADA'S SUGGESTION THAT CONSTITUTION MIGHT BE INTERPRETED MORE FLEXIBLY IN FUTURE HAS PROMPTED SOME EDITORIALS TO COMMENT THAT PACE IS MOVING TOO FAST -- ASAHI HINTED IT IS AT BEHEST OF INDUSTRIALISTS SEEKING WAY OUT OF RECESSION -- AND NEW INTERPRETATIONS ARE OPEN-ENDED. STATEMENTS REMAIN ON RECORD, HOWEVER, AND WERE REAFFIRMED BY GOJ UNIFIED VIEW. ON THE WHOLE, DEBATE THUS FAR HAS BEEN REALISTIC AND OBJECTIVE, WITH ADVANTAGES, IF ANY, ACCRUING TO MODERATE POSITION: FIRM MAINTENANCE OF US-JAPAN SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTINUED MODERNIZATION OF JAPANESE CONFIDENTIAL

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